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ABSTRACT

This final report of a five-year project describes the activities of Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK), a Montana program designed to provide support, training, and information to parents of infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities. A priority of the project is to serve members of groups that have been traditionally underserved, especially families living in rural locations and Indian families living both on and off reservations. Goals of the project included: (1) to assist parents in understanding the nature and needs of the disabling conditions of their children; (2) to demonstrate ways parents can support their child's educational program; (3) to enable parents to communicate more effectively with special educators, administrators, related service personnel, and other relevant professionals; (4) to empower parents as decision-makers in the special education process, including development of their child's Individualized Education Program; (5) to provide parents with information about the options, programs, services, and resources available at the national, state, and local levels to assist infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities and their families; and (6) to increase parents' understanding of the provisions for education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Activities the project conducted to achieve these goals are outlined. (CR)

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Final Report--Years 1-5

Training Personnel for the Education of

Individuals with Disabilities

August 1992-July 1997

Part I: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Date of Report: September 26, 1997

Grant Identification Number: H029M20001-95

Period of Report: August 1996-July 1997

Agency: Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK)

Address: MSU-Billings, SPED Building, Room 267
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Descriptive Title of Project: Parent Training and Information Center

Name of Project Director: Katharin A. Kelker, Ed.D.

Katharin A. Kelker, Executive Director

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Name and Title of Certifying Representative: Annalee Allen, Board President

Annalee Allen, Board President

Overview

Parents, Let's Unite for Kids has been funded since 1986 by the Department of Education to be a Parent Training and Information Center to provide support, training, and information to parents of infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. PLUK was refunded by the Department of Education for a five year period beginning August 1, 1992 and ending July 30, 1997. The area served by the grant includes the whole state of Montana. A priority of the project is to serve members of groups that have been traditionally underserved, especially families living in rural, remote locations and Indian families living both on and off reservations.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

During the project's five years from August 1, 1992 through July 31, 1997 a total of 23,628 parents were served directly by Parents, Let's Unite for Kids. This is an unduplicated count gleaned from records of telephone calls, e-mail, and in person meetings at the PLUK central office and in regional locations. During the years 1992-1997, PLUK staff provided 525 training workshops for 14,137 participants.

Services to Native American Families

Montana has seven reservations--Flathead, Blackfeet, Rocky Boy, Fort Belknap, Fort Peck, Crow and Northern Cheyenne--which are populated by 12 Indian tribes that make up about 6% of the state's total population. Of the parents PLUK served from 1992-97, 13 percent (3,306 individuals) identified themselves as being Native American. Successful strategies for making contact with Native American families have included:

- Membership on PLUK board of American Indian parent
- Formal cooperative agreement with Ft. Peck Tribal Health Project; agreements with Northern Cheyenne, Blackfeet, and Rocky Boy Reservations
- Cultural sensitivity training for all staff members
- Use of local radio stations and newspapers to advertise training
- Posters at Indian Health Service locations
- Posters at Mental Health Centers serving reservations
- Contacting professionals serving Indian communities
- Forming local community networks of Indian professionals, including County Extension agents serving counties with large Indian populations
- Displays and presentations at American Indian conferences (e.g. education, health, youth-at-risk, higher education)
- Inclusion of members of the Blackfeet and Crow tribes in Partners-in-Policymaking; recruitment for Partners 1997 of Native American participants
- Training Family Support Volunteers who are Native American
- Linking Indian parents with other Indian parents
- Presenting at least 2 workshops per year at reservation locations
- Joint workshops with American Indian Head Start programs
- Presenting a specially designed communication workshop
- Advocacy curriculum delivered in courses at tribal colleges
- Piggy-backing training workshops with local cultural events (e.g. powwow's)
- Inservice training for Head Start programs on each of the reservations

Services to Rural Families

Montana has no urban areas; that is, no community in the state has over 85,000 people and most Montanans live in towns of 1,000 or fewer. The PLUK organization reaches out to rural families in the following ways:

- Using a regional model with Family Support Specialists located in Bozeman, Missoula, Great Falls and Colstrip
- Offering a toll free telephone service
- Providing training workshops in rural, remote locations (even when audiences are small)
- Attending school meetings with parents who live in rural, remote locations

- Budgeting high levels of money for travel to rural, remote areas.

Outreach to Parents of Newborns

To reach parents of newborns with disabilities, PLUK has trained an experienced parent in parent-to-parent techniques and placed her on a monthly financial retainer. Her job entails making contacts as quickly as possible with families that have an infant in the Intensive Care Nursery at St. Vincents Hospital, the largest maternity hospital in Montana. The Outreach Specialist is available at any time to go to the hospital if she is called by hospital staff member or by a parent. Even if she is not called, she makes a visit to the ICN twice per week just to keep up personal contact with the staff. She attends all ICN staff inservice training workshops and has provided training to the ICN nurses on bereavement issues. A cordial, friendly relationship has been established between the Outreach Specialist and the ICN staff. During 1996-97, the parents of every infant born with a disability at St. Vincents Hospital have been referred to the PLUK Outreach Specialist and every parent has indicated a desire for the parent-to-parent support. The strategy appears to be working well because of the consistent and personal contact with staff.

Primary Accomplishments

1. Sibling training
2. Assisted in developing state guidelines for services to students who are medically fragile
3. Developed service database displayed statewide at Governor's Press Conference
4. Published Disability Awareness Curriculum: People Like Us
5. Opened an assistive technology demonstration laboratory
6. Focused new services on reaching families of children with emotional disorders
7. Participated in task force to revise state's system for funding special education
8. Began a small demonstration school for at risk students
9. Taught a graduate course in assistive technology at Interamerican University in San Juan, Puerto Rico
10. Participated in two statewide systems change grants on transition and inclusion
11. Trained four classes of Partners in Policymaking
12. Received an EPICS mini-grant
13. Wrote an handbook on developmental disabilities services in Montana
14. Served on a task force to develop state guidelines for assistive technology in the public schools
15. Received a contract to pilot a third-party evaluation system for Developmental Disabilities services in Montana
16. Published *Family Guide to Assistive Technology*
17. Published *Parents Guide to Transition*
18. Developed a 30 minute video entitled "Pathways through Transition"
19. Created new workshop format on curriculum modification
20. Trained fourth class of Partners in Policymaking
21. Developed self determination training format for teens
22. Hired and trained five new staff members
23. Brought all staff online on electronic communication system
24. Developed a paperless system for collecting programmatic data

PROJECT STATUS

The purpose of this project is to provide information, training and assistance to 7,500 or more parents in Montana over a five year period so that these parents can make good use of the opportunity they have to participate in their children's special education program. From 1992-97, PLUK served a total of 25,895 parents, almost three times the number projected to be served during this period. The following chart presents the accomplishments for years 1-5 of the project toward meeting the goals, objectives and activities outlined in the project narrative. The chart indicates the status of each activity. In every case, the actual performance of PLUK on each activity meets or exceeds the targeted timelines and guidelines for numbers of individuals to be served.

GOAL 1.0 To assist parents in understanding the nature and needs of the disabling conditions of their children

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	STAFF	STATUS
1.1 To respond to requests from 1,400 parents and 100 professionals per year for information and referral by utilizing the PLUK central database toll free telephone line, and mailings of information	1.1.1 Conduct database searches in response to inquiries from 150-200 persons annually	Annually	PD/LIB	Met years 1-5
	1.1.2 Provide toll free telephone assistance to at least 500 persons annually	Ongoing	PD/CT	Over 3,000 per year
	1.1.3 Mail resource materials as follow-up to inquiries	Ongoing	LIB	Met
	1.1.4 Expand information on programs, services and resources	Ongoing	PD/LIB	Over 100 pieces per month
1.2 To expand current library holdings and provide print and video information to 600 persons per year	1.2.1 Assess resources by topics, relevance, needs of parents and professionals	At least twice each year	LIB	Met
	1.2.2 Develop appropriate handouts and files of materials	Ongoing	PD/LIB	Met
	1.2.3 Print out lists of holdings from central database	As needed	LIB	Met
	1.2.4 Develop proposals to funding sources for videos and software	Months 6-8 yearly	PD	Met
	1.2.5 Publish information about library holdings in monthly newsletter	Monthly (except July)	PD	Met

GOAL 2.0 To demonstrate ways that parents can support their child's educational program

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	STAFF	STATUS
2.1 To develop a training format for teaching parents the skills involved in supporting their child's educational program	2.1.1 Compile state-of-the art materials on parent involvement in education	Year 2 Months 9-12	PD	Met-yr.2
	2.1.2 Develop and test curriculum	Year 3 Months 1-4	PD/CT	Met-yr 3
	2.1.3 Train 50 parents per year using the newly designed workshop, Supporting Your Child in Special Education	Year 3-5	CT	Met
2.2 To link "new" parents with "experienced" parents for the purpose of sharing expertise and providing support	2.2.1 Maintain a roster of parents experienced in working with schools and special education programs	Ongoing	PD/LIB	Met
	2.2.2 Link at least two parents per month during the school year	Yearly, Months 1-9	PD/CT	Met

GOAL 3.0 To enable parents to communicate more effectively with special educators, administrators, related service personnel, other relevant professionals

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	STAFF	STATUS
3.1 To train 50 parents per year in communication skills	3.1.1 Refine, expand and develop workshop materials and training techniques	Year 1 Months 9-12	PD	Met
	3.1.2 Offer communication workshops to 50 parents yearly	Yearly	CT	Met
3.2 To design and present advocacy skills training at two tribal colleges each year	3.2.1 Revise advocacy curriculum	Year 1 Months 1-3	PD/FSS	Met
	3.2.2 Test and revise curriculum	Year 1 Months 4-7	FSS/CT	Met
	3.2.3 Present advocacy skills training at two tribal colleges	Years 2-5	FSS/CT	Met
3.3 To train at least 20 parents and 20 professionals per year in collaboration and mediation techniques	3.3.1 Distribute conflict resolution materials	Ongoing	LIB	Met
	3.3.2 Conduct team-building workshops at least 2 times per year	Months 1-12	PD/CT	Met
3.4 To provide preservice and inservice training for 40 professionals per year in disability awareness or cultural sensitivity	3.4.1 Identify preservice and inservice programs interested in disability awareness or cultural sensitivity training	Yearly, Months 1-3	PD	Met

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	STAFF	STATUS
3.5 To inform and collaborate with at least 10 policy-making and advisory groups so systems and services become more responsive to children's and families' needs	3.4.2 Revise training materials to suit audiences	Year 1, Months 1-3	PD	Met
	3.4.3 Deliver training at least once per grant year	Yearly, Years 2-5	PD/CT	Met
	3.5.1 Develop and distribute PSA's, brochures and other forms of publicity	Ongoing	PD/LIB	Met
	3.5.2 Make presentations to policy-making groups year	At least 6 times per year	PD	Met
	3.5.3 Meet with SEA, DD Council, CSPD, Family Support Services Advisory Council and other similar statewide groups	At least 6 times per year	PD	Met

GOAL 4.0 To empower parents as decision-makers in the special education process, including the development of their child's Individualized Education Program

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	STAFF	STATUS
4.1 To revise curriculum and train 250 parents in their rights and responsibilities under IDEA	4.1.1 Evaluate existing rights and responsibilities workshop and revise materials based on new material in IDEA	Year 1, Months 6-10	PD	Met
	4.1.2 Train staff in the delivery of the revised workshop	Year 2, Month 2	PD	Met
	4.1.3 Train 50-75 parents per year	Years 2-5	PD/CT	Met
4.2 To train 50 parents per year to participate in educational decision-making, including the development of the Individualized Education Program	4.2.1 Present a parent training workshop--"The Almost Easy IEP" at least once per year	Yearly	CT	Met
	4.2.2 Conduct IEP Rap sessions at least once yearly in each region	Yearly	CT	Met
	4.2.3 Answer in the monthly newsletter questions concerning parents' rights and responsibilities under IDEA	Monthly except July	PD	Met
4.3 To provide individual assistance with problem solving related to preparation for, conduct of, or follow-up after IEP meetings with Pilot Parents	4.3.1 To train 25 Pilot Parents per year	Yearly during months 7-9	PD	Met
	4.3.2 To link new parents who have experience developing and analyzing IEPs	Yearly	PD	Met

GOAL 5.0 To provide parents with information about the options, programs, services, and resources available at the national, State and local levels to assist infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities and their families

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	STAFF	STATUS
5.1 To develop curricula for and train 200 parents in utilizing the national, state and local service systems	5.1.1 Compile state-of-the-art materials on the national, state and local service systems	Year 1	PD/FSS	Met
	5.1.2 Develop and test curricula	Year 1	PD/CT	Met
	5.1.3 Provide at least one service system workshop per region per year	Years 2-5	CT	Met
5.2 To provide at least one specialty training workshop per region per month for nine months of each year	5.2.1 To revise and present transition curriculum to 50 parents and 50 professionals per year	Months 1-9	PD/CT	Met-yr.4
	5.2.2 To present at least two assistive technology workshops per year	Yearly	PD	Met
	5.2.3 To present the following workshops at least once per year: Same Rules Don't Apply; LRE, Integration and Full Inclusion; Assistive Technology in the IEP; Wills, Guardianship and the MSST Trust; Supported Living and Supported Work; Family Support	Yearly	PD/FSS	Met

GOAL 6.0 To increase parents' understanding of the provisions for the education of infants, toddlers, children and youth under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	STAFF	STATUS
6.1 To develop outreach strategies for contacting 50 new parents per year and providing information and support	6.1.1 Develop outreach strategies	Year 1, Months 1-3	FSS	Met
	6.1.2 Test outreach strategies	Year 1, Months 4-6	FSS	Met
	6.2.3 Implement outreach strategies	Ongoing	FSS/CT	Met
6.2 To train 50 parents per year in "First Steps," a training workshop on Infant and Toddler and Preschool Special Education	6.2.1 Advertise availability of training	Ongoing	FSS	Met
	6.2.2 Develop mechanisms for delivering workshop on a regular basis	Year 1, Months 1-3	PD/FSS	Met
	6.2.3 Train at least 10 new parents per year in each region	Yearly	FSS/CT	Met